

# PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

## COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

### HABITATS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

#### Turtle Nesting Sites

Wisconsin has 11 species of turtles, all of which nest annually in late spring through early summer. Nesting can begin as early as May 20 and often extends through early July. Turtle nests occur in a variety of locations where sandy and/or well-drained soil is exposed to sun for most of the day. Typical locations include sand banks along rivers and lakes, road shoulders, gravel driveways, and gardens. Some turtle species nest within several feet of open water while others travel 1,000 feet or more away from open water to nest. Depending on the species and on weather conditions, eggs may hatch in as little as two months, although three to four months is more common. Some species, like the painted turtle, may overwinter in their nests, not emerging until the following spring. A successful hatch is often indicated by a small hole where the hatchlings emerged from the nest.

Predation is the primary threat to turtle nests, especially in areas where nests are concentrated, such as an open sand bank or along the shoulder of a road. Natural succession also threatens many nesting sites. Prolonged flood events can swamp nests and destroy the eggs. Vehicle travel threatens adults and nestlings on or near roadways, while soil compaction from vehicle travel can, in extreme cases, trap young in their nests.

#### ***Management Objectives***

- Maintain and enhance turtle nesting habitat.
- Protect known turtle nests and nesting areas.

#### ***Management Prescriptions***

- Remove woody vegetation and non-native invasive species like spotted knapweed that encroach on sandy banks or open, sandy soils where turtles may nest.
- In areas with a tree canopy, keep the canopy open to allow as much sunlight as possible to reach the ground.
- Where it does not conflict with other property objectives, create and maintain additional turtle nesting sites on open, southerly-exposed sandy areas along river banks that are elevated enough to escape most minor to moderate floods. This is especially important in areas where roadside nesting is occurring.
- Consider using nest enclosures around known nesting areas to prevent predators from digging up eggs. Where feasible, entire nesting areas can be protected with low-voltage electric fencing. If an exact location is known for a single nest, a [nest cage](#) can be placed over the nest.

